

Friday, September 7, 2007

Investigative Team Sent To Japan

On August 20, a China Airlines B737-800 caught fire while parked at Naha Airport, Okinawa, Japan, just prior to unloading passengers, following a flight from Taipei, Taiwan, to Okinawa, with 157 passengers and 8 crewmembers on board. The flight crew reported that there were no fire warning indications, but that, as they were performing the parking checklist, ground staff alerted them of a fire. The passengers and crew exited with no serious injury reported. An uncontrolled fire burned for over 10 minutes, destroying the aircraft. On-scene evidence and witness statements confirmed that a substantial fuel leak had initiated the fire.

On August 21, Safety Board investigators Bob Benzon and Carol Horgan launched as the U.S. Accredited Representative and Technical Advisor, respectively, to support the Japanese Aircraft and Railroad Investigation Commission (ARAIC) investigation of this accident. Also on the U.S. Team were representatives from the FAA, Boeing and CFM International. Within days of their arrival, the U.S. team was able to identify the source of the fuel leak to be components of the slat system that had punctured a slat track housing (see Figure 2), which is located inside the 737's wing fuel tank near the leading edge of the right wing.

Carol Horgan devised a plan to use a borescope to more closely inspect the hidden area inside the housing to uncover more clues as to why the components broke loose (see Figure 3). As a result of this work, the team was able to quickly determine that the cause of the loose components was a missing washer, which was likely left out due to a maintenance error, and that other aircraft having undergone similar maintenance activity may also be at risk. The information was quickly conveyed to staff at Headquarters, and Carolyn Deforge led efforts at HQ to push for immediate inspection of the entire fleet of affected aircraft, which included all 737-600, -700, -800, and -900s. Within five days of the accident and as a direct result of the Safety Board's work on this investigation, the FAA issued Emergency Airworthiness Directives (AD), AD 2007-18-51 and AD 2007-18-52 to require the inspection of all affected 737s for loose hardware within 10-days. To date, inspections on approximately 30% of the worldwide fleet have uncovered loose hardware in several other 737 aircraft, including aircraft in the U.S. Safety Board investigators are continuing to track these results and conduct additional investigative work to assure appropriate corrective actions are being taken and to identify the safety system deficiencies that contributed to this accident.



China Air 737-800, flight 120

NTSB Testifies on Capitol Hill

National Transportation Safety Board Chairman Mark V. Rosenker testified on September 5 before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on Structurally Deficient Bridges in the United States. During his testimony, he discussed the Safety Board's history of investigating bridge accidents and the Board's investigation into the August 1, 2007, I-35W bridge collapse over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"Forty years ago, following the bridge collapse in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, we issued safety recommendations to the Federal Highway Administration to establish national bridge inspection standards for locating, inspecting, evaluating and correcting bridge deficiencies," Rosenker said. "Currently, Safety Board staff is still on-scene in Minnesota investigating the tragic accident that claimed 13 lives and involved 133 injuries."

A month after the bridge accident, much of the bridge superstructure is still underwater and there is still considerable work remaining to determine why the structure collapsed.

"We will determine the probable cause of the bridge collapse; make recommendations, and help restore public confidence that this kind of accident will not happen again—that is our mission," Rosenker said.

Last year, Congress turned to the Safety Board to investigate the collapse of ceiling panels in the Big Dig tunnel in Boston. As a result of the NTSB's investigation, there are radical changes in the thinking in the highway construction industry about the long-term structural properties of epoxy in the overhead applications as they relate to epoxy creep.

The full text of Chairman Rosenker's speech can be found on the NTSB's website.

Chairman Rosenker Addresses ISASI Seminar In Singapore



Chairman Rosenker delivers the keynote address at the 2007 ISASI Seminar

Years of international cooperation in accident investigation are paying dividends, but more needs to be done, according to National Transportation Safety Board Chairman Mark V. Rosenker.

Speaking before the annual seminar of the International Society of Air Safety Investigators in Singapore on August 28, Chairman Rosenker noted that many of the safety improvements that ISASI and other groups have promoted "are now providing the benefits we predicted." These would include professional crew training and elevated Standard Operating Procedures, adherence to stabilized approach criteria, improved reliability of aircraft power plants, and specific enhancements such as satellite navigation systems, moving map airport displays, and airborne and ground anti-collision systems.

Noting the title of the seminar, "Investigation Cooperation: From Investigation Site to ICAO," Rosenker urged participants to transfer vital information from an accident site anywhere in the world, with careful analysis along the way, to the offices and the staff of ICAO in Montreal. "What we have to do now is to maintain...momentum for an ever-increasing level of aviation safety."

Prior to delivering the keynote address at the ISASI Seminar, Chairman Rosenker spent time in Tokyo, meeting with our Japanese counterparts. He met with officials from the Aircraft and Railway Accidents Investigation Commission (ARAIC) and the Japan Marine Accident Inquiry Agency (JMAIA) at their offices in Tokyo. Chairman Rosenker and Chairman Goto of the ARAIC discussed the current investigation of the China Air accident that occurred in Okinawa, just days prior to their visit to Tokyo, in which the NTSB is assisting the ARAIC. He also spent time discussing the on going, working relationship between the U.S. and Japan with JMAIA Commissioner Kishi. Along with Chairman Goto and Commissioner Kishi, senior level staff from both agencies agreed with the Chairman Rosenker that transportation safety must continue to be addressed at an international level, in order to improve from the level that we are at today.



Chairman Rosenker participates in a briefing with the ARAIC

John DeLisi Selected As Deputy Director Of the Office of Aviation Safety



Mr. DeLisi is a cum laude graduate of aerospace engineering at the University of Michigan, and a former lead flight test engineer at McDonnell Douglas Corporation. He has been employed with the NTSB in the Office of Aviation Safety for 15 years. In this time he has served as Systems Group Chairman in foreign and domestic major air carrier accident investigations, as Deputy Chief and then Chief of AS-40 (Aviation Engineering Division), and most recently as Chief of the Major Investigations Division (AS-10) where he is responsible for the management of all major foreign and domestic aviation accident investigations. Mr. DeLisi has demonstrated exceptional performance in every aspect of all positions held at the NTSB. His high qualifications make him a valuable addition to the OAS senior management team.

NTSB Slim Down Completed!

The NTSB has proven again that, dollar-for-dollar, it provides the best return for the American taxpayer. We have "slimmed down" in our space utilization in two locations and backfilled with sublease tenants.

First, the headquarters space consolidation has been completed, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has signed a three-year agreement to sublease the vacated 4th floor space, beginning on September 1, 2007.

Second, the Federal Air Marshall Service (FAMS) has signed a 10-year agreement to sublease our underused 1st floor space at the Ashburn Training Center beginning September 17, 2007. These agreements will result in significant savings to the agency. The teamwork exhibited by the various offices impacted by these initiatives is a credit to the professionalism of this agency. The NTSB is a stronger and more efficient organization as a result.

Important Travel Information

We are transitioning to a new financial system during the fiscal year-end. The last interface between the travel subsystem and the payment system will occur Monday evening, September 24th. All claims should be completed no later than 4 p.m. on the September 24th in order to be included in the payment interface. Please ensure that ALL vouchers for completed travel and FY 2007 employee claims for reimbursement (local claims) are processed to completion as soon as possible. NO payments (other than payroll) will be made to employees or vendors between September 26th and October 10th, which is a two-week window.